



## Solar thermal Australia's one remaining opportunity for industry leadership

Posted by [Phil Hart](#) on October 28, 2010 - 9:47pm in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Alternative energy](#)

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The Australian is not renowned for progressive pieces on our renewable industry, but the article last month '[Solar sector held back by foggy energy policy](#),' deserves some more publicity.



The government is driving the solar industry to the point of exasperation because of the lack of clarity, constant changes, and delays in its policy for supporting large-scale solar development.

The industry has already urged the government to rework its Solar Flagships program, after pointing out that the \$1.5 billion scheme unveiled in May was ill-conceived, unworkable and simply wasn't enough to fund the 1000MW target.

The [Solar Flagships] conference was addressed by Resources Minister Martin Ferguson, who again rejected feed-in tariffs. He pointed to the experience in Germany, where he said feed-in tariffs to support rooftop solar and the like had cost the country \$1bn a year for less than 1 per cent of its energy needs. **But the solar industry points out that was never the point of the scheme in a country with such lousy solar conditions. Germany now possesses the intellectual property and the manufacturing and export capacity that is expected to make it one of the three dominant global players in an industry that will be worth tens of billion dollars a year. It now has 50,000 employees in the solar industry.**

**Australia, with the best solar conditions in the world, and the home of some of its best technological developments, has little more than 1000, and no manufacturing capacity to speak of.**

Grimes says Australia had the chance to be a global leader in roof-top and small-scale solar photovoltaics, but lost it. "We are now a consumer of those products from Germany and China. Solar thermal is our one remaining opportunity for industry leadership. It's ours to capture or lose. Let's see if we can learn from history and do better."

The full article from [The Australian](#) is well worth a read.

And the foggy policy continues with the [latest news](#) that the NSW Government is slashing its Feed In Tariff (FIT) from 60 cents to 20 cents. I am, as the Australian Solar Energy Society have said, "disappointed that the NSW Government continues to develop a boom and bust approach towards the solar industry".

If only we had a Federal Government that wasn't so totally absorbed with their 'dig it up and ship it out' mentality and instead had the vision like Germany to make something out of our world class ideas and renewable resources.



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